

## Jane Rosen

Winfield Gallery

Helaine Glick, Writer + Curator  
[hpg@cruzio.com](mailto:hpg@cruzio.com)

A small fragment of nature's diminishing wildness seems to have found its way into Jane Rosen's airy studio. The light flooding in from floor to ceiling glass doors illuminates stately birds of prey perched on pedestals throughout the room. They glow with filtered light and with a spirit of wildness imbued in them by Rosen. Walls are hung with studies and drawings of birds already created and yet to be, marked with the colors of pigmented glass that will embody them—lyrical names like cinnamon, alabaster, celadon, tobacco, ancient parchment. In this sanctuary-like space Ms. Rosen abides among the birds she respects and admires, and who in fact brought her to this secluded Northern California ranch.

Despite her current residence, Ms. Rosen is a born and bred New Yorker. A graduate of New York University, she also studied at the Art Students League, and held a senior faculty position at the New York School of Visual Arts. She regularly exhibited her work in the city and participated in its dynamic art scene. Although an active career as an arts educator took her to prestigious colleges and universities across the country, including a ten-year stint at the University of California, Berkeley, until the late 1990s she always returned to New York City. So how did Rosen, formally educated in all elements of art with such pedigreed professors as Chuck Close and Sol LeWitt land at this rural ranch, and arrive at her current nature-driven body of work?

Several clues point to Ms. Rosen's early interest in birds of prey—her regular childhood visits to the Egyptian collection of hawks and falcons at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and summers at her family's place on an Oak Island bird preserve just an hour out of Manhattan. Ultimately, it was a visit to her brother and an afternoon drive on the coast road south of San Francisco that changed the direction of her life. The outing introduced her to the wild, sparsely populated coastal hills south of San Francisco. Instantly captivated, she rented a ranch, initially intending to try out a six-month sabbatical break. But a moment came when, looking up at a hawk circling in the sky she heard a voice clearly say, "Stay and tell my story," and she realized her decision was made. "I could tell the story from a New Yorker's point of view," she decided. Educated broadly in the sculptural language of masters like Auguste Rodin, Alberto Giacometti, and Constantin Brancusi, and versed in contemporary sculpture, especially that of Martin Puryear whose forms she knew and loved, Ms. Rosen found that in this place there was something new she wanted to say. "I started to feel that I had to tell a story and that the story was of a spiritual nature, and that there was something given in a horse standing there, or a posted hawk, or a hand, or a series of forms being hit by light, that became teachers."

Now long established in California not far from that original horse ranch, Ms. Rosen continues to focus on birds of prey, although ravens, horses, sheep, wolves, and foxes also appear in both her sculpture and in her compelling multi-media drawings. However, her principal passion—one

might even say her totem—is still the elegant and imposing hawk. Initially she worked primarily in stone, a medium she first encountered as a very young student. In 1988 she and four others were awarded a grant to study sculpture in Portugal, where she learned the intricacies of working with marble from masters. The experience was formative, and revealed her innate compatibility with stone. The pigmented limestone sculpture *Pescadero Bird* (2017), exemplifies her intuitive connection to the material. With strong, expressive marks but minimal detail Rosen delineates the raptor’s curving head and shoulders, its smoothly rounded chest, ruffled wings, and powerful stance. Touches of sienna and ochre pigments add subtle feathery highlights. Although seemingly at rest, the bird conveys a formidable latent energy—as if any moment it will stir, spread its wings, and fly.

Ms. Rosen continues to sculpt in stone, but her primary interest and medium now is glass. As a two time Artist in Residence at Pilchuck—the prestigious glass school founded by artist Dale Chihuly—she worked with master glass artists, including William Morris and his assistant Ross Richmond, who is her glass partner today. Over the years Ms. Rosen immersed herself in the medium and learned all facets of the process. She prepares the initial drawings for each piece and with Mr. Richmond, chooses the color pigments. Once the process begins, molten glass cannot be put aside until a sculpture is completed to everyone’s satisfaction—an exacting series of steps that requires many hours of concentrated skill and artistry. Rosen’s expertise enables her to interact with everything taking shape along the way, and to communicate seamlessly with Mr. Richmond as he works the glass. Together they have developed an innovative process to pre-fire bits of glass to create a glass “drawing” (or lace, as they call it), which when applied to the molten material imparts both color and intentional markings.

One of her most recent sculptures, the regal *Celadon Lace Back Bird* (2019), beautifully demonstrates the delicacy and effectiveness of the lace technique. Intricate patterns, softly infused with celadon pigment, cover the bird’s tail and chest, and accentuate its bright shoulders and wings. The markings add a new dimension to the material, enlivening its surface and creating details suggestive of elusive feather patterns. The equally captivating cinnamon-colored wall piece *Lace Watercolor Bird* (2018), features lace applications on its bright white chest. Layers of copper, bronze, and ochre-colored pigments define its head, shoulders, and tail, mimicking feathers made iridescent by the light. Although glass, Rosen’s birds have a distinctive, almost velvety matte surface, achieved through fine sand blasting and acid etching. She is in fact a passionate admirer of twentieth century Italian still-life painter Giorgio Morandi, whose quiet arrangements of jars, pots and bottles are highly esteemed. Morandi considered his humble objects sacred, and did not allow them to be touched nor even dusted. In his honor, Rosen endeavors to achieve a similarly muted surface on all of her glass pieces.

Although her sculptures are obviously birds of prey, Ms. Rosen intentionally avoids identifying details or easy familiarity; wild life portraits are not her aim. Illuminating the grace and dignity of essential raptor-ness is what she is after, and what she has achieved. These sculptures are a kind of marvelous omen—recalling us to a hawk’s primal and essential place in the natural world, and to our own as well. Rosen feels very strongly, “more than I can even say,” that she has the opportunity to reach people with her artwork, and help them to appreciate and respect nature,

“so they won’t destroy it.” She says, “that’s a job I could do,” and so she does. In paying homage to these noble creatures through her sculpture, Rosen presents us with a fragment of the indomitable spirit and wild beauty that moves her, so we too can marvel, understand, and protect.